

**Opening Statement**  
**Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher**  
**House Armed Services Committee**  
**Threat Panel Hearing on Middle-East Threats**  
**September 28, 2005**

I am pleased to welcome our witnesses this morning to talk about one of the most challenging regions in the world.

As our panel takes a close look at both threats that immediately threaten our nation and threats that may require the deployment of U.S. military assets over the next 20 years, we would like your unvarnished assessment of the strengths and gaps that exist in our capabilities to affect the region.

None of the threats have short term answers.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has bedeviled multiple administrations.

Iranian support for regional terrorist organizations and its efforts to build a nuclear program go back several years.

Depending on our level of commitment to Iraq and to a number of factors that we may have little control over, Iraq could either turn into a stable bastion of democracy or slip further into instability.

Saudi Arabia and other states with autocratic leaders will experience growing pressures for liberalization from their people and the transitions to other forms of government are rarely smooth.

Beyond immediate security considerations, we have yet to fully understand how massive demographic pressures, great economic disparity, and ethnic and religious tensions will affect our interests in the region.

We do not expect to have a crystal ball that can predict all types of scenarios in the region, but I believe we can come up with a reasonable set of answers on where and when our military can help advance our interests or shape outcomes in the Middle-East.

Again, thank you to my colleagues on the panel for their hard work and to our witnesses for their insight today.